## Middle School Argument Writing Agenda: November 1st, 2013

#### Task 1: Inductive Warm-up

1.1: Preview the vocabulary words below from the Word Generation lesson we will be reading today.

undergo: to experience

\*empower: related to something giving authority or power

\*implications: likely consequences

deny: to declare to be untrue

\*role: expected behavior; a job or function

1.2: Text talk questions: activate background knowledge and apply the vocabulary words (with asterisks)

- a. Think back to your favorite childhood toy. Describe the toy? Why did you love it? What did you do with it? Share with a partner.
- b. As an adult, we often understand things differently than we did as children. Consider the *implications* of your favorite toy. Do you have different feelings about the toy now? Why or why not?
- c. Word Generation lesson 22 asks the following question: *If you were parent, would you buy a doll (or toy) that misrepresented your values?* Is that part of a parent's **role?**
- d. Would you consider the toy you described as being *empowering* for you as a child? Explain

### Task 2: Read the Word Generation weekly passage.

- What is the first claim and the evidence supporting it?
- What is the second claim and the evidence supporting it?
- Read the four Word Generation positions. Which position do you most agree with at this time? Jot evidence for your position in the box with it.

#### Task 3: Literature as Argument

**3.1**: Do a close reading of Barbie-Q by Sandra Cisneros.

**3.2**: Which of the four positions above would Sandra Cisneros take? Use evidence from Barbie-Q to support your answer.

### <u>Task 4</u>: Gathering evidence to develop a claim

- **4.1**: Read the NPR article *Pretty, Plastic Barbie: Forever What We Make Her* and the New York Times editorial *The Evolution of Women's Roles, Chronicled in the Life of a Doll.*
- **4.2**: Read the claims/quotes below. Choose one quote and support it with evidence from the three of the four texts you have read. Incorporate the vocabulary words from task 1 in your essay. Use the 8 Argument Writing Rubric as a guide.
  - Men are self-confident because they grow up identifying with superheroes. Women have bad self-images because they grow up identifying with Barbie. -Rita Rudner
  - Growing up, my dolls were doctors and on secret missions. I had Barbie Goes Rambo. –Zoe Saldana
  - Advertising is the modern substitute for argument; its function is to make the worse appear the better. —George Santayana



# Focus Words

undergo | empower | implications | deny | role



## WEEKLY PASSAGE

Cindy Jackson loves Barbie. When she was a little girl, she thought her Barbie doll was beautiful and glamorous. As an adult, she decided to undergo surgery to look more like Barbie. Doctors made her lips and breasts larger and her waist, legs, and nose thinner. She wrote a book about her life called Living Doll.

Of course, Cindy Jackson is an isolated case. Many children love Barbie, but very few will go to such extremes. Still, many adults worry about the implications of Barbie's body-type as an ideal. They say that Barbie's thinness makes her a dangerous role model. If Barbie were made the size of a real person, her waist would be narrower than a gallon bottle of milk. Real girls will never look like Barbie, even if they starve themselves, but they may try.

Adults also worry about Barbie's emphasis on appearance. Some popular Barbies include Totally Hair Barbie and Top Model Barbie. Adults worry that Barbie's glamorous looks, fancy clothes, and handsome boyfriends encourage girls to focus on beauty and boys instead of school, sports, and other interests. Focusing too much on appearance

may hurt girls' self-esteem. To some people, Barbie represents women as pretty, but shallow.

Mattel, the company that makes Barbie,

dontos that the doll hurts girls' self-esteem.

Instead, it calls Barbie "a girl-ompowering

pioneer" who is "an inspiration to millions." Before

Barbie, most dolls were babies or little girls, not

women. The woman who created Barbie thought
that giving girls dolls that looked like beautiful

women would make them feel good about growing

up.

There are some reasons for thinking that Barbie could be a positive role model. Some Barbies are shown in strong roles, such as the Olympic Gymnast Barbie and the Barbie for President doll. Seeing a woman in these roles may encourage girls to set high goals. Also, Barbie's body has changed over time. In 1997, Mattel made Barbie's waist slightly thicker and her hips and breasts slightly smaller. The company said Barbie's new body would look better in new clothing styles. But many think the company was responding to criticism.

What do you think? Would you buy a Barbie for your child?

I would not buy a Barbie doll for my child. Barbie is a bad role model. Her thin body and her focus on clothes and boys have negative implications. Position 1

Position 3

I would buy any Barbie for my child, but I would talk to my child about Barbie's unrealistic figure.

I would only buy a "girl-empowering" Barbie for my child. Her exciting careers encourage girls to set high goals.

Position 2

Position 4

I would buy Barbie or any doll my child wanted. Dolls are not role models.

### Barbie-Q

#### **By Sandra Cisneros**

Yours is the one with mean eyes and a ponytail. Striped swimsuit, stilettos, sunglasses, and gold hoop earrings. Mine is the one with bubble hair. Red swimsuit, stilettos, pearl earrings, and a wire stand. But that's all we can afford, besides one extra outfit apiece. Yours, "Red Flair," sophisticated A-line coatdress with a Jackie Kennedy pillbox hat, white gloves, handbag, and heels included. Mine, "solo in the Spotlight," evening elegance in black glitter strapless gown with a puffy skirt at the bottom like a mermaid tail, formal-length gloves, pink chiffon scarf, and mike included. From so much dressing and undressing, the black glitter wears off where her chest stick out. This and a dress invented from an old sock when we cut holes here and here and here, the cuff rolled over for the glamorous, fancy-free, off-the-shoulder look.

Every time the same story. Your Barbie is roommates with my Barbie, and my Barbie's boyfriend comes over and your Barbie steals him, okay? Kiss kiss kiss. Then the two Barbies fight. You dumbbell! He's mine. Oh no he's not, you stinky! Only Ken's invisible, right? Because we don't have money for a stupid-looking boy doll when we'd both rather ask for a new Barbie outfit next Christmas. We have to make do with your mean-eyed Barbie and my bubblehead Barbie and our one outfit apiece not including the sock dress.

Until next Sunday when we are walking through the flea market on Maxwell Street and there! Lying on the street next to some tool bits, and platform shoes with the heels all squashed, and a fluorescent green wicker wastebasket, and aluminum foil, and hubcaps, and a pink shag rug, and windshield wiper blades, and dusty mason jars, and a coffee can full of rusty nails. There! Where? Two Mattel boxes. One with the "Career Gal" ensemble, snappy black-and-white business suit, three-quarter-length sleeve jacket with kick-pleated skirt, red sleeveless shell, gloves, pumps, and matching hat included. The other, "Sweet Dreams," dreamy pink-and-white plaid nightgown and matching robe, lace-trimmed slippers, hair-brush and hand mirror included. How much? Please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, until they say okay.

On the outside you and me skipping and humming but inside we are doing loopity-loops and pirouetting. Until at the next vendor's stand, next to boxed pies, and bright orange toilet brushes, and rubber gloves, and wrench sets, and bouquests of feather flowers, and glass towel racks, and steel wool, and Alvin and the Chipmunks records, there! And there! And there! And there! and there! and there! Bendable Legs Barbie with her new page-boy hairdo, Midge, Barbie's best friend. Ken, Barbie's boyfriend. Skipper, Barbie's little sister. Tutti and Todd, Barbie and Skipper's tiny twin sister and brother. Skipper's friends, Scooter and Ricky. Alan, Ken's buddy. And Francie, Barbie' MOD'ern cousin.

Everybody today selling toys, all of them damaged with water and smelling of smoke. Because a big toy warehouse on Halsted Street burned down yesterday—see there?—the smoke still rising and drifting across the Dan Ryan expressway. And now there is a big fire sale at Maxwell Street, today only.

So what if we didn't get our new Bendable Legs Barbie and Midge and Ken and Skipper and Tutti and Todd and Scooter and Ricky and Alan and Francie in nice clean boxes and had to buy them on Maxwell Street, all water-soaked and sooty. So what if our Barbies smell like smoke when you hold them up to your nose even after you wash and wash and wash them. And if the prettiest doll, Barbie's MOD'ern cousin Francie with real eyelashes, eyelash brush included, has a left foot that's melted a little—so? If you dress her in her new "Prom Pinks" outfit, satin splendor with matching coat, gold belt, clutch, and hair bow included, so long as you don't lift her dress, right?—who's to know.

# Pretty, Plastic Barbie: Forever What We Make Her

by Kim Masters

Aired on NPR March 09, 2008

She's not the centerpiece of a classic film, nor the protagonist of a great novel. She's Barbie — known not so much for her own strong character traits, but for the attributes people assume she has, based on her appearance. Barbie's character, to a certain extent, has become what people make of her.

"I don't know any other toy that has generated so much discussion and so much passion and so much, usually, ambivalence," says author Peggy Orenstein, who's written extensively about issues affecting girls.

And she's right: Barbie — ever famous, often infamous — has been analyzed, politicized and demonized. She has inspired art, along with powerful emotions.

"You either see her as the embodiment of oppressive, Teutonic standards of beauty, or you see her as all that is good and sweet and innocent about your childhood," says Orenstein. "But you can't not have a relationship with Barbie."

#### She Always Looks Great, and She Never Talks Back

Collectible-doll dealer Joe Blitman specializes in Barbie. His Hollywood home is packed with Barbies of every era — including the very first one.

"She's wearing the very famous black-and-white striped swimsuit," Blitman points out. "Comes with sunglasses, shoes. She came brunette or blond. And these originally sold for \$3."

Today, she might fetch as much as \$12,000.

Why would an adult want to pay that kind of money for a Barbie? Most of Blitman's customers are women, and they tell him the same thing:

"Barbie was their best friend growing up, because she always agreed with them," he says. "She didn't talk back. She always looked great. And they always envisioned her being five to seven years older than they were, no matter what their age."

#### **Creators Expected Controversy**

Barbie sprang from the mind of Ruth Handler, whose husband was a co-founder of Mattel, the company that makes Barbie. Handler was watching her daughter Barbara playing with movie-star paper dolls when the idea for Barbie was born.

The first version was based on a German doll named Bild Lilli. She, in turn, had been inspired by a cartoon character with a fondness for sugar-daddies.

"They basically copied the face," Blitman explains. "So it's very hard. I mean, this is not the face of a 17-year-old. This is the face of a 40-year-old woman who's seen a lot of action."

Mattel officials declined to be interviewed for this story, but Blitman says the company expected controversy from the start.

"It was clear to psychologists that the doll was going to be a hit with children, because it really filled that need of having a role-playing toy," he says. "And the parents were destined to absolutely detest it, because of the breasts."

Parents responded so negatively that Sears — the key retailer of the day — initially refused to sell the doll. Mattel soon gave Barbie's face a softer look, but the problem was not the face. If Barbie were human-size, she would have a

relatively modest 36-inch chest but a waist of only 18 inches. Research at a hospital in Finland said she lacks the body fat required for menstruation.

Name another doll who invites that type of scrutiny.

#### **Barbie Evolves**

Mattel widened Barbie's waist in 1992. And in 1972, Barbie surrendered her sideways glance. Blitman believes that change was an acknowledgement of the feminist movement, since her new direct gaze seemed less demure.

But tilting Barbie's eyes didn't make her into a real girl, says author Peggy Orenstein.

At one time, Mattel tried to give Barbie a back-story. Her full name is Barbara Millicent Roberts, she's from Willows, Wisc., and her parents were George and Margaret.

But those details didn't catch on. Orenstein thinks the fact that Barbie is stubbornly amorphous may explain one of the more common activities that children engage in with Barbie: torturing her.

Orenstein says a friend told her about a child who lined her Barbies up in the driveway, then had her mother drive over them.

"And she was really gleeful about it," Orenstein says. "I just can't imagine another toy where you, first of all, take the time to do that ... and where you would be so happy about it."

#### A Potent Ideal

Director Todd Haynes, whose films include Far from Heaven and I'm Not There, thinks girls may torture Barbie because they are so ambivalent about the feminine ideals she embodies. Haynes cast Barbie in the role of Karen Carpenter in his 1987 film Superstar — <u>a biopic shot entirely with dolls</u> standing in for actors. For Haynes, casting Barbie in the role of an anorexic young woman was an obvious choice.

"The use of dolls," Haynes says, "and the use of Barbie dolls in particular, had all of these layers of meaning that I think people really understood without it feeling like an academic exercise."

Over the years, Mattel has tried to turn Barbie into a positive role model. She became a pilot instead of a flight attendant, a doctor instead of a nurse. But the really popular Barbies now are princesses, or least princess-like. Barbie has starred in her own versions of Swan Lake and Rapunzel. These days, girls play with Barbies when they're very young. By the time they're 6, most of them have moved on.

Barbie is facing stiff challenges. She's competing with the powerhouse Disney princesses and with toys like Webkinz — plush animals that come with interactive online alter-egos.

And compared with the more overtly sexualized dolls in stores today — like the tarted-up Bratz — Orenstein says Barbie seems almost quaint.

But though Barbie may be diminished, but she isn't going away. The reason is simple:

"If you sort of put aside all the theories and the feminism and the hype and everything," Orenstein says, "I have to say that — you know, deep in my bones — I still think Barbie's kind of fun."

# The New York Times

March 30, 2004

## The Evolution of Women's Roles, Chronicled in the Life of a Doll

By CAROL E. LEE

It seems wrong, in a way, for Women's History Month to end without an exegesis on Barbie. True, she is no Susan B. Anthony. Sure, she leads a life that only a molded plastic figurine guided by limitless imagination could lead. But Barbie, Mattel's best-selling doll, has been a presence in the childhoods of most American women, and by now her history is a little bit of our history.

Over the years we've been encouraged to marvel at Barbie's dexterity. She has navigated an exceptional career path and maintained a picture-perfect 43-year relationship, with ne'er a hair out of place. Last month, however, the fantasy unraveled. Mattel announced two days before Valentine's Day that America's favorite plastic couple had split up.

Those of us who wondered, "Who will get the Dream House?" were a bit perplexed to learn that it's not an issue. There would be no lawyers' fees over the divvying up of assets, no quibbling over who keeps the Beach Cruiser, because Barbie and Ken were never married. That was a bit of a shock, and it provoked a complicated reaction. What do you call a single woman who's gone steady for more than four decades? Sexually liberated? Lacking in imagination? Commitment phobic?

Barbie made her debut in 1959 as a fashion model. Ken entered the scene two years later. The happily unmarried couple began their radical lifestyle together at a time when the working husband and his stay-at-home wife reflected mainstream cultural values on programs like "The Dick Van Dyke Show." Barbie made up for her radicalism with acceptable feminine occupations, like candy-striper volunteer and ballerina -- although, always contradictory, she did sport a spacesuit four years before NASA put a person on the moon.

The 1970's were a confusing time for Barbie. Her popularity decreased for the first time. The nation was experimenting and seeking adventure. Women were going to college and entering the work force in droves. Barbie quickly gathered herself and followed suit. Never one to settle for mediocrity, she became a surgeon and an Olympic downhill skier.

By the time the 80's rolled around, Ken's main squeeze had gotten her groove back. She would not be caught unawares again. She covered all possible fast tracks. Barbie the hard-nosed business executive and Barbie the Unicef ambassador rivaled pop icons like Madonna and Cyndi Lauper as Barbie the rock star, and she sweated it out like Jane Fonda as an aerobics instructor. Luckily for the slew of exotic and domestic pets she'd acquired over the years, she also became a veterinarian.

If there ever was a decade that tested Barbie's will, it was the 1990's. Women had broken through so many doors it seemed there weren't many unopened ones left. Leave it to Barbie to pick the less-trod path. In 1992 she entered the presidential race, wearing a glittery red, white and blue ball gown, of course. That same year, however, Teen Talk Barbie was heard complaining that "math class is tough." She had

obviously not been paying attention to her more accomplished versions. Barbie couldn't have become a paleontologist and an engineer without knowing how to solve a quadratic equation.

Barbie's little arched feet also ran in predominantly male circles as a police officer, a firefighter, a pilot and a Marine sergeant. Working women with laptops and cellphones, and female pediatricians and dentists, were no longer novelties by the time Barbie got there, but she was ahead of her time as a Nascar driver. She gained street cred as a rap artist, and demonstrated her athletic agility as an Ice Capades star, scuba diver, W.N.B.A. player and Women's World Cup soccer player.

In 1998, Barbie went through one of her most drastic changes. Her breasts shrank, and her torso put on a little weight. Ken didn't love her any less -- he stuck by her side for another six years. And while Barbie's family grew by leaps and bounds, the kids -- Skipper, Tutti, Stacie, Todd, Kelly and Krissy -- were introduced as her siblings, not illegitimate children. So there will be no need for a new outfit for the custody battle.

Now that Barbie has morphed into the latest trendy persona -- single woman -- who knows what she'll tackle next. But anyone scribbling away on a "Barbie and the City" pilot may want to think twice. Her future sounds more like Baywatch Barbie. Word is that she's surfing the California waves and has her eye on an Australian boogie-boarder named Blaine.

| ELEMENT  | SELF-ASSESSMENT, PEER & TEACHER 1 <sup>st</sup> DRAFT (Please check all that apply for feedback and revision)        | UTAH CORE STANDARDS  |
|--|--|--|
| Reading/<br>Research                               | The writer –uses relevant information from multiple print and digital sources  | 8W7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.   |
|  | supports an argument with relevant and sufficient facts and details from resources with accuracy                     | 8W8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding  |
|  | uses credible sources  | plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.   |
| Development  | The writer –addresses the writing task with a focused response   | 8W1b: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.   |
|  | establishes a clear claim and acknowledges opposing claimssupports claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence | 8W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (i.e., Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced). |
|  | demonstrates understanding of the text(s) or topic.  |  |
| Organization                                       | The writer –introduces the claim(s) and opposing claims  | 8W1a: Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claims from alternate or opposing claims and organize reasons and evidence logically.  |
|  | organizes reasons and evidence clearly   | 8W1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.   |
|  | uses words, phrases, and/or clauses<br>to clarify the relationships among claim(s)<br>and reasons                    | 81W1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.  |
|  | provides a concluding statement or<br>section that follows from the argument<br>presented                            |  |
| Language<br>Knowledge<br>and Use for<br>Production | The writer –demonstrates a command of standard English conventions; errors do not interfere with understanding       | 8L1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing;(8L2) capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.  8W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the   |
| and<br>Distribution<br>of Writing                  | uses a formal style appropriate to task, audience and purpose  | development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.   |
|  | uses varying sentence patterns for meaning, reader interest, and consistent tone.                                    | 8W6: Use technology, including internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.  |
|  | IS READY TO PUBLISH FINAL WRITING FOR OTHERS   |  |